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in the closed position and disengages from the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the open position and wherein the resilient portion of the rear jaw faces the heating element so that the resilient portion conforms to the shape of the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the closed position.

12. (Amended) A device for heat sealing at least two thermoplastic films together, the device comprising:

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front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which the front and rear jaws are proximate each other to compress the at least two thermoplastic films together, the rear jaw including a resilient portion facing the front jaw;

a front jaw release sheet positioned between the insertion zone and the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position;

a heating element positioned between the front jaw release sheet and the front jaw, wherein the front jaw release sheet engages the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the closed position and disengages from the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the open position; and

at least one spacer attached to the front jaw release sheet, wherein the front jaw release sheet is disengaged from the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the open position.

18. (Amended) The device of claim 9 wherein:

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the heating element and the resilient portion of the rear jaw each have a given cross-sectional thickness; and

the cross-sectional thickness of the heating element portion that is unembedded in the front jaw is no less than about 0.55 times the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion.

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19. (Amended) The device of claim 18 wherein the cross-sectional thickness of the heating element portion that is unembedded in the front jaw is no less than the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion.

20. (Amended) The device of claim 18 wherein the cross-sectional thickness of the heating element portion that is unembedded in the front jaw is no less than about twice the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion.

22. (Thrice Amended) A device for simultaneously heat sealing and severing at least two thermoplastic films, the device comprising:

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front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which the front and rear jaws are proximate each other, the rear jaw including a resilient portion facing the front jaw, the resilient portion having a given cross-sectional thickness;

a front jaw release sheet positioned between the insertion zone and the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position; and

a heating element positioned between the front jaw release sheet and the front jaw, wherein the cross-sectional portion of the heating element that is unembedded in the front jaw is no less than about 0.55 times the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion.

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42. (Thrice Amended) A device for simultaneously heat sealing and severing at least two thermoplastic films, the device comprising:

front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which the front and rear jaws are proximate each other to compress the at least two thermoplastic films

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together, the rear jaw having a resilient portion facing the front jaw, the resilient portion having a given cross-sectional thickness; and

a heating element positioned between the insertion zone and the front jaw, wherein the cross-sectional portion of the heating element that is unembedded in the front jaw is no less than about 0.55 times the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion.

Support for these amendments may be found in the application as originally filed, for example, at least as follows:

Claim 9 – page 11, lines 8-10 and Figure 3; and

Claims 18-20, 22 and 42 – page 9, lines 4-10 and 16-29 and Figs. 3-4.

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the above-identified application. Claims 1-33 and 35-48 remain in this application. Claims 9, 12, 18-20, 22, and 42 are amended to more particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter that Applicants regard as their invention. Applicants respectfully traverse the rejections as conceivably applied to the amended claims.

Attached is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claims by the current amendment. The attachment is captioned "Version with Markings to Show Changes Made."

I. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation the allowance of claims 1-8, 27-29, and 35-37. Applicants also note with appreciation that claims 12-14 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claim. To that end, claim 12 has been amended to independent form; claims 13-14 depend from claim 12.